

Opening Address  
Senate President Pro Tem Edward E. Quick  
Second Regular Session  
90th Missouri General Assembly  
January 5, 2000

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, Lt. Gov. Wilson, friends and family, and my fellow Senators. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to welcome each of you back to the State Capitol. Today, we begin the Second Regular Session of the 90th Missouri General Assembly.

The year 2000! The new millenium!

There are those who believe that this is the last session of the old millennium. There are those who believe that this is the first session of the new millennium. Then there are those here who would try to amend either of these proposals.

Here in this chamber, I seem to recall that we spent the better part of an evening debating what day it was - or at least what day the record should reflect that we adjourned. And, of course, we succeeded, after extended debate on the matter.

That's just one of the things the Missouri Senate is all about: debating issues - often at length, often at very great length, sometimes at very, very great length. However, this is what needs to happen when there is an honest difference on what the solution to an issue should be.

Last year, for the first time in many years, and for only the third time since we became a state, this body moved the previous question. Yet, it is worth noting, that we did so to continue debate, not to limit it. Free and fair discussion has long been the trademark of the Missouri Senate. For this body, and for the citizens we serve, I hope it always will be.

As I think back on the hundreds of hours of debate that I've enjoyed listening to in this chamber, I am often reminded of how important it is for this body to laugh once in a while. It breaks the tension, keeps tempers calm, and makes the hard issues we have to decide easier to deal with. Plus, we also make some important cultural discoveries. It was here, in this very chamber, that we made the connection between water moccasins, hand fishing and modern dance. And you'll recall when the Senator from Stone and the Senator from Shannon enlightened us as to the origin of the Macarena.

I believe that this is the time that I am supposed to remind everyone of all the many past successes that we have been able to accomplish for the citizens of Missouri. This body knows very well what those issues are and how well we dealt with them. Most of us, myself included, will be stressing these accomplishments numerous times in our up-coming elections.

The Missouri Senate has earned its bragging rights.

This summer I appointed interim committees to research and hold public meetings across the state. These committees were formed to educate us on the issues that we need to deal with this session. Each committee has or will submit a report and recommendation. I will make sure that each of you receive copies.

In 2000, I would like to see the Missouri Senate take the lead and address the following issues:

- Set up a tobacco trust fund for safekeeping and let the people decide what to do with the settlement proceeds
- Health care reform including a comprehensive patient bill of rights
- Protect seniors from telemarketing fraud, elder abuse, poor living conditions and skyrocketing prescription costs
- Education issues including school violence, charter schools, and early childhood education
- Tying up any loopholes regarding meth, sexual predators and protecting our children from abuse.

Night before last as Jane and I were discussing what message I wanted to deliver to you today, I decided finally on just two very important issues: term limits and harmony.

Probably the most important issue that cannot be solved alone by this body is term limits. In the year 2002, roughly 31 out of 34 Senators will not be able to run for re-election. I think this session we need to paint lines in the Capitol similar to a hospital: We would have a blue line to the bathrooms, a green line to the committee hearing rooms and a yellow line to the chamber for the future Senators to find their way.

We have all heard "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away". In the past, our positions were given and taken away by the voters. Now, with term limits, no matter how well you represent your district, in two terms the citizens must choose someone to replace you. The mere fact that people will no longer have the constitutional right to vote for a person who has served eight years in this body is of great concern to our democracy and well being of the state. This concern crosses party lines. It affects us

all. The citizens no longer will have the continuity, experience and knowledge their elected officials need to get things done. I believe this is an issue that each and every one of us needs to be talking about at every opportunity within our districts, to our constituents, to our respective parties and among our colleagues.

The second very important issue I want to talk about is harmony in a world of difference. We are all different and we need some harmony! Each and every one of us worked very hard to become a member of the Senate. I believe we each have the desire and the dedication to serve our constituents to the very best of our ability. If we disagree let it be an honest disagreement. We are all intelligent, caring people who with patience, hard work and a little humor can find satisfactory solutions. Let each of us have as our goal to serve in such a way that Missouri and its' citizens are better off because we were elected.

I look forward to working with each of you during the upcoming session. It really is my privilege serving as your President Pro Tem, and it is a responsibility I take very seriously. However, when I start taking things too seriously, when it gets hard to smile, I just remember that the Senator from Shannon was born on April Fools Day, and I find comfort in this evidence that there is a higher power, and that this higher power has a heck of a sense of humor.

And we should too. It will help us be our best in the days and weeks ahead.

Thank you.